

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 1, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
330 C St SW  
Washington, D.C. 20416

Dear Secretary Azar:

As states across the country develop and expand access to testing, the federal government must provide additional resources to help states meet their testing goals. Over the last week, against the recommendations of health officials, several states have taken steps to begin re-opening. In our home state of Michigan, Governor Gretchen Whitmer began easing certain restrictions while implementing common-sense safety measures to ensure businesses and customers are protected. At the same time, Governor Whitmer extended Michigan's stay-at-home order to help curb the spread of COVID-19. As more states lay the groundwork for re-opening, states look to the federal government to develop recommendations and best practices for testing.

As members of Congress representing one of the hardest hit regions in the United States—Oakland, Macomb, and Wayne counties—we are particularly concerned by barriers to testing that already exist in our districts. Southeast Michigan demonstrates how frontline communities are being impacted by COVID-19 at a greater rate than the rest of the country; our residents disproportionately experience water shutoffs, lack reliable access to transportation, and live with underlying health conditions that intensify the virus.

Last week, Congress passed an additional funding package to provide resources for our nation's health system and small businesses, as well as \$25 billion for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to increase testing capabilities through the disbursement of \$11 billion to states, the District of Columbia, territories, and Native American Tribes. Along with the critical financial resources, HHS is required to submit a strategic testing plan that includes the following:

- Assistance to test for both active infection and prior exposure, including hospital-based testing, high-complexity laboratory testing, point-of-care testing, and mobile testing;
- Guidelines for testing;
- A plan to increase domestic testing capacity, including testing supplies; and
- A plan to address disparities in testing.

Without direction from the federal government, states have been forced to procure testing kits in an open competition with other states across the country. As the pandemic continues to spread,

local institutions, such as health providers, businesses, and universities, have stepped up to increase testing capacity. For example, Ford Motor Company, Wayne State University, and ACCESS, a non-profit organization, have partnered together in southeast Michigan to offer mobile testing for first responders, health care workers, and individuals experiencing symptoms of COVID-19<sup>1</sup>. All three partners have shown their willingness to expand testing capacity, however without assistance from the federal government, the testing capabilities are still significantly lower than what is needed to safely re-open states.

States like Michigan are eager to demonstrate their leadership and ability to provide large scale testing, including ramping up the capacity to do mobile testing. To do that, the federal government must use its expansive network and resources to provide states with testing kits and supplies necessary to match the demand. With an additional tranche of funding set to be distributed for expanding testing, states are still awaiting guidance on the dissemination of said funds.

In light of this, we respectfully request answers to the following questions by May 8, 2020:

- 1) When will HHS disseminate a strategic testing report to provide states, territories, the District of Columbia, and Native American Tribes with resources on best practices and guidelines for expanding testing?
- 2) What criteria will HHS use when distributing the \$11 billion to states and localities?
- 3) Will states be required to provide a testing strategy? If so, what will be the criteria for evaluating the plan?
- 4) What emphasis will the strategic testing plan place on developing and expanding mobile testing capabilities? Will HHS provide guidelines to ensure workers have the safety equipment they need to conduct the tests?
- 5) Will states with large concentrations of COVID-19 cases, such as Michigan, New York, New Jersey, and California, receive additional funding to further understand the scope of the pandemic?
- 6) Will the strategic testing guide include resources on strengthening public-private partnerships to bolster testing capabilities?

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<sup>1</sup> Ford, *Wayne State Roll Out Mobile Testing for COVID-19 in Metro Detroit*, Fox 2 Detroit (April 15, 2020) (Online at <https://www.fox2detroit.com/news/ford-wayne-state-roll-out-mobile-testing-for-covid-19-in-metro-detroit>)

Thank you again for your leadership, and we look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Brenda L. Lawrence". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Brenda L. Lawrence  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Rashida Tlaib". The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct dot over the 'i' in Tlaib.

Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Andy Levin". The signature is cursive and appears to be written quickly.

Andy Levin  
Member of Congress